

IN THE CLAIMS

1-14. (cancelled)

15. (currently amended) A method of fabricating a fuse, the fuse ~~comprising~~ including end conductor elements, a fuse element secured between and making electrical contact with the end conductor elements, an elongate fuse housing extending between the end conductor elements, and a ~~silicone~~ an arc energy absorbing coating at least partially coating a first and a second end portion of the fuse element, the housing comprising an inside surface defining a passageway extending longitudinally from a first end to a second end of the housing, the fuse element extending through the passageway, said method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element;

coupling the fuse element to the end conductor elements; and

coupling the end conductor elements to the housing.

16. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein said end conductor elements comprise a first end cap and a second end cap, each end cap comprising a flange, and said ~~step of~~ coupling the end conductor elements to the housing ~~comprising the steps of~~ comprises:

positioning the first end cap over the first end of the housing;

positioning the second end cap over the second end of the housing; and

crimping the flanges to engage the housing.

17. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said fuse element comprises at least one strip of conductive metal, each strip comprising a plurality of weak spots extending the length of the strip and a silicone coating at least partially coating a first

location adjacent a first end of the strip, and at a second, separate, location adjacent a second end of the strip, and said ~~step of coupling the fuse element to the end conductor elements comprises~~ the steps of:

soldering the first end of the at least one strip of conductive metal to the first end cap; and

soldering the second end of the at least one strip of conductive metal to the second end cap.

18. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said fuse element ~~comprises one~~ includes a strip of conductive metal and said method further comprises ~~the step of forming a plurality of bends in the strip to form a plurality of straight segments.~~

19. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein the fuse element ~~comprises~~ includes an element assembly, the element assembly ~~comprising~~ including a fuse wire, and a substantially flat nonconductive bridge ~~comprising~~ including a first end portion, a second end portion, and an elongate central portion, the elongate central portion ~~comprising~~ having first and second side sections extending between the first and second end portions of the bridge, the first and second side sections defining an elongate opening in the bridge, ~~the fuse wire~~ said method further comprising extending the fuse wire between and coupled to the first and second end portions so that the fuse wire makes electrical contact with the first and second end caps, the fuse wire extending through the elongate opening in the bridge, the silicone coating at least partially coating the fuse wire at a first location extending from the bridge first end portion into the elongate opening and at a second, separate, location extending from the bridge second end portion into the elongate opening.

20. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein said end conductor elements ~~comprise~~ include first and second terminal elements, ~~the first terminal element positioned at the first end of the housing and the second terminal element positioned at the second end of the housing, the first and second terminal elements,~~ said method further

~~comprising closing the passageway at either end with the end conductor elements to form a chamber inside the housing, the fuse element extending through the chamber, each terminal element comprising including a terminal blade extending outward from an end wall.~~

21-28. (Cancelled)

29. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein the fuse element includes a plurality of weak spots having a reduced cross sectional area, said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises incompletely covering at least one of the weak spots with the coating.

30. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein the fuse element includes a first end, a second end, and a plurality of weak spots having a reduced cross sectional area positioned between said first end and second end, said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises applying the coating between the first end and a respective one of said weak spots closest to the first end, and applying the coating between the second end and a respective one of said weak spots closest to the second end.

31. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 30 wherein:

said applying the coating between the first end and a respective one of said weak spots closest to the first end comprises applying the coating such that the part of the weak spot closest to the first end is covered with the coating and part of the first end of the weak spot closest to the first end is uncovered by the coating, and

said applying the coating between the second end and a respective one of said weak spots closest to the second end comprises applying the coating such that the part of the weak spot closest to the second end is covered with the coating and part of the first end of the weak spot closest to the second end is uncovered by the coating.

32. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein the fuse element includes opposite ends and a plurality of weak spots between the opposite ends, said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises applying the coating between the ends of the fuse element and a portion of a first weak spot adjacent each of the ends such that the fuse element is free of coating therebetween.

33. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 15 wherein the fuse element is a flat strip having opposite sides, said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises applying the coating to each of the opposite sides.

34. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 19, said method further comprising coupling the fuse wire to the first and second end portions.

35. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 19 wherein said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises at least partially coating the fuse wire at a first location extending from the bridge first end portion into the elongate opening and at a second, separate, location extending from the bridge second end portion into the elongate opening.

36. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 19 wherein said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element comprises coating portions of the fuse wire located between the central opening and the end conductor elements.

37. (new) A method of fabricating a fuse, the fuse including end conductor elements and a fuse element having first and second end portions, the fuse element secured between and making electrical contact with the end conductor elements within a fuse housing, said method comprising:

applying an arc energy absorbing coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element while leaving a center portion of the fuse element between the first and second end portions free from said coating;

positioning the fuse element within the housing; and

electrically connecting the fuse element to the end conductor elements.

38. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 37, the fuse element including at least one weak spot adjacent one of said first and second end portions, said applying an arc energy absorbing coating comprising incompletely covering the weak spot with the coating.

39. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 37 further comprising forming a plurality of bends in said fuse element.

40. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 37 wherein the fuse element is a wire and the fuse further includes a nonconductive bridge having first and second end portions and an opening therebetween, said method further comprising extending the fuse wire through the opening and coupling the fuse wire to the end portions of the nonconductive bridge.

41. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 40 wherein said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse comprises applying the coating to the fuse wire between the opening and the respective ends of the nonconductive bridge.

42. (new) A method in accordance with Claim 37 wherein the fuse element is a strip having opposite sides, said applying the coating to the first and second end portions of the fuse element while leaving a center portion of the fuse element between the first and second end portions free from said coating comprising coating both of the opposite sides of the fuse element at the end portions of the fuse element.